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NEWS AND VIEWS OF THE INTERNATIONAL FASHION WORLD

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THE 32ND INTERSTOFF WASN'T ALL GLOOM & DOOM

The overpoweringly dreary color palette was a reflection of the Weltschmerz (sorrow over the world's sad state of affairs) that has gripped Europe's textile houses. But they redeemed themselves with ingenious new fabric textures and prints for Fall '75.

NEW FABRICATIONS: soft, lightweight, with surface interest including hairy ... cloths were brushed, scrubbed, napped, sanded, sueded, hairy, loopy, nubbly ... Softties: cotton brushed like flannelette (Cantoni), sueded flannel, acrylic jersey with cashmere hand (Schmoll), velours, velvet, velveteen ... Other Surface Interest: pin-wale corduroy, heathery nubbly tweeds and plaids (McNutt, Michel Thierry), hopsack, etamine, cobweb boucle and Raschel knits that combine chenille with inlay yarns ... Furry: rabbit hair in various weights, angora, mohair.

NEW PRINTS: paisleys in every size -- vertical, chevron, striped borders (Etro had excellent ones) ... Pointillist: in striped effects or with flowers (Segalini). Flowers: from mini massed to grandiose, giant floral or leaf prints abounded, Jackson Pollack splatter prints with graffiti writing (Montero, Cugnasca, Segalini) ... Stripes in profusion, most important the pajama, and the ombres which have a soft edge effect (Bernard Neville of Cantoni) ... Scenics in bayadere or perspective (Banfi, Montero) ... Geometrics on stippled grounds (Bombyx), finely engraved mini patterns (Rossi) ... Batiks ... marbelized Bookbinder prints ... linear abstracts ... most were on colored grounds.

DREARY COLORS: Darks -- deep purple, forest green, midnight navy, Bordeaux, ox-blood, black ... Muteds -- ochre, olive drab, slate blue, lavender, thistle, jam tones ... GRAY, from silver to banker's.

AMERICAN RTW: THE LONG, SOFT SPRING OF '75

"Long" both ways: length is now below the knee, notwithstanding Halston's publicity-prone "skimp," and even he shows it covered by "long" coats. FI's appraisal: one lone fashion designer, however well intentioned, can hardly reverse a world-wide economic downturn (his avowed intention). Fashion has historically reflected prevailing conditions -- not caused them. "Long" also defines the extent of the season: with Spring increasingly a sometime-thing, designers have turned to what they call year-round fabrics, but warm-weather is the goal of 3 Spring surprises: cottons ... sundresses ... cuffed shorts.

"Soft" best describes the look ... soft fabrics ... soft silhouettes ... soft sleeves ... soft details ... "soft" colors.

THE SOFT SILHOUETTES

Everything continues soft and loose ... but Empire is trending -- for evening (Trigere, George Halley) -- for day, peignoir (Bonnie Cashin for Philip Sills) ... skirts are on the move -- bias flared -- 4-gore (Vera Maxwell) -- 8-gore (Haire for Friedricks, Brenner Couture, Brenner Bees) -- circular (Ralph Lauren, Vera Maxwell) -- hip-stitched pleats.

THE SOFT DRESS STARS FOR SPRING

Almost every house now puts its strength into dresses. But the "glorified nightgowns" in limp fabrics, with ruching or ruffles, are fortunately in the minority. The shirtdress and belted chemise are the safe ones. THE BIG ONES: chemises -- but no chemises (Halston) ... smocks ... tents (Parnis Boutique, John Kloss) ... sheaths ... belted to blouse ... wrap-and-ties ... 2-piece are fewer now ... THE NEW (continued on page 2)

ONES: pinafores and pinafore looks (Ralph Lauren, Scott Barrie, Bieff-Herrera, Albert Nipon, Clovis Ruffin) ... jumpers (Concept VII) ... the "speed dress," long-torso Helanca/nylon stretch top with printed cotton skirt goes on over the head, has no closure to fasten (Vera Maxwell) ... sundresses.

"SOFT SHOULDERS" DOMINATE THE DETAILS

Square and drop-shoulder YOKES gain momentum in this, their 2nd season -- but disgorge fewer gathers, if any -- give vent to open pleats, sleeves included (Paganne) -- are matching leather on canvas coats (Cashin) -- cape yokes on everything, even dresses (Bill Kaiserman for Rafael) -- smocked yokes.

Even the CINCH BELT is SOFTENED: the deep contour belt is centered with a narrower wrap-and-tie -- in Fibranne (Leo Narducci/Ambiance), reverses from solid cotton to striped (Brenner Couture), is centered with colored "marshmallow," the widely used resilient leather-look vinyl (Kasper for Joan Leslie, Narducci), in fake calf (Victor Joris) -- it's the belt first featured for Resort by Halston and Parnis Couture, and is now referred to as an "obi" ... FI liked chain belts that dip to one hipbone on which they rest lightly (Donald Brooks).

NECKLINES are banded -- square -- or cowls, draped, set-on, or asymmetric draped twists (Brenner Couture) -- ascots on blouses ... MATCHING SCARFS, long and narrow or triangular, or printed neckerchiefs.

SLEEVES, ALL SOFTIES: wide, loose, most with softly turned-back cuffs called "rolled sleeves," especially when short ... elasticized, above-elbow push-ups ... Dolmans, exquisitely envelope-draped all along the outside, for evening (Bill Blass, Halley) -- elbow-bloused, for day (Cashin) ... short kimonos (Paganne), with turn-back cuffs (Narducci) ... short raglans on dresses and T-shirts (Oscar de la Renta) ... cap sleeves for day and late-day, and on Ultrasuede dress worn over shiny yarn long-sleeve pullover (Halston) ... full-blown, for evening ... puffed shoulders trending ... drop-shoulders.

ICINGS ON THE CAKE: pintucks (Oscar, Casi, Chester Weinberg, Friedricks, Albert Nipon)

fagotting (Bill Blass, Ilie Wacs, Gabor/Estevez), even fagged seams on a suede cape (Cashin) ... ruching ... DRAWSTRINGS at neck, on bosom at yoke level, on sleeves and cord made into bow-ties even when no drawstring exists -- plus elegant return of covered buttons in back.

SOFT: THE UNLINED COATS AND CAPES

The best Spring coats are unlined, most of them in double-faced fabric -- short-sleeved (Cashin) -- with superb smock-yoke backs (Blass, Estevez) -- with eye-turning choir boy yokes all around (Halley) ... the best Spring capes are also unlined and benefit from judicious new structuring -- with small, square neck (Trigere) -- "the centerfold," a supple, unpressed pleat in center back (Halley) -- a welted square-yoke smock-top with 7-button-down the front (Haire for Friedricks) -- a double-cape becomes supple for lack of lining (Cashin).

SOFT SUITS, MANY IN SILK, AGAIN

But when in doubt, lead Chanel! Coco herself couldn't have dreamed up the number and variety now extant on 7th Avenue -- in wovens and knits and in every price range -- it's the safe one. For the more adventurous: suit vests, double breasted and shawl collared, single breasted and pointed ends ... zip-front yoked smock-tops with 8-gore skirts ... boleros with skirts pleated below the hip ... pea jackets with straightish skirts ... 2-tones ... one-button, but not mannish ... short sleeved.

THE SOFT PANTSUITS AND CUFFED SHORTS

Pants are cut loose, without being full -- without side seams (Trigere shows many of them) -- completely un-mannish (Blass, Beene) -- safari pantsuits in pintucked cotton (Casi) -- wool or cotton pantsuits, often with "double besom" pockets, one slightly above the other (Rafael) ... Shorts are cuffed, many additionally softened with pretty pockets -- short Bermudas (Oscar, Halston, Barrie) -- Jamaicas (Beene Bag, Ruffin) -- with contrasting color zipper pockets in front (Cashin) -- in khaki, with pannier pockets (Ralph Lauren) cuffed "city shorts" in yellow Army cloth with patch pockets (Friedricks) ... tap pants (Victor Joris, Ruffin Sportswear). (continued on back page)

London, Oct. 74, is a somber place. Its shops reflect the uncertain economic outlook, plus last winter's restricted work week. There are shortages, and many boutiques are so carefully merchandised, their cupboards, although not bare, are rather lean. Prices are high. Skirts outnumber trousers. Tent dresses and jumpers are popular. More suits around than last Fall. The knitwear is plentiful and good. Despite the gloom and doom, several new boutiques have opened ...

Valentino, 25 Sloane St. The Rome designer's elegant apparel, accessories.

Laura Ashley, 9 Harriet St. (off Sloane St.). Opened Oct. 7 ... her long Victorian dresses, corduroy chemise and pinafore dresses, velvet capes, pin tucked blouses, cotton nighties.

Regine, Chelsea Hotel, Sloane St. French and Italian imports. Sophisticated and expensive.

Jeff Banks, 34 Margaret St. (opposite Miss Selfridge). Tel: 499-9901. This British knitter now has his own boutique for his color-coordinated groups of dresses, sweaters and separates.

Lucienne's, 89 Knightsbridge. Tel: 235-2134. Just opened by Lucienne Phillips (no longer connected with shop bearing her name up the Road), a charming Frenchwoman with excellent taste. She carries the best British designers and knitters, including less well known names Stateside. Expensive.

Howie, 352 Fulham Rd. Tel: 352-9128. Just 2 months old. High fashion casual wear and accessories for men, designed exclusively for Paul Howie by such as John Ashpool, Katherine Hamnet and Wendy Dagworthy.

Browns, 23 So. Molton St. Tel: 499-5630. New shoe shop. Women's boots and shoes by Maud Frizon. Men's from Rossetti, Cerruti and British "bench-made."

Joseph, 21-23 Brompton Arcade. Joseph Ettedgui's French separates and knitwear. Also apparel from Pablo and Delia, a rather unknown but good pair of English designers.

FULHAM ROAD: THINGS ARE LOOKING UP AGAIN

Butler & Wilson, at #189. Tel: 352-3045. Lovely Art Deco jewelry, beads, bangles and clip pins.

Valerie Goad, at #185-187. Tel: 352-8355. Cheerful, lots of Liberty prints.

Eggs, at #54. Tel: 589-1334. Relatively new shop, features sportswear, knitwear and separates.

Bombacha, at #104. Tel: 584-5381. Item boutique for tweed and corduroy separates and jacquard knit sweaters.

BEAUCHAMP PLACE

Cannibal, at #61. Tel: 589-1038. Branch in Chelsea Hotel, Sloane St. Their own knitwear and coordinates made in the North of England, and their classic shirts in Swiss cotton prints, solids and jersey. Exclusive hand-painted day and evening wear. Tweeds. Some men's shirts and sweaters.

Formula, at #59. Tel: 589-9882. Branches: 70 Hampstead High St. and 126 Regents Park Rd. Collections from Timwear, Jeff Banks, Georges Rech, Michel Comte, La Squadra, Umberto Ginocchietti's pointelle, tweed, and printed cashmere sweaters. Shoes, accessories.

Fauve, at #49. Tel: 589-0396. Owned by Joy Forrester, formerly proprietor of Countdown on Kings Rd. Strong on English separates and dresses, jacquard knits. Some Italian imports. Will add men's haberdashery in November.

SOME UNUSUAL CHARM, OFF THE BEATEN TRACK

Catherine Buckley, Ltd., 302 Westbourne Grove (near Portabello). Tel: 727-4937 or 229-8786. Retail and wholesale. Her real success began in 1970, with the discovery of a cache of 1½ tons of cotton and silk chenille jacquard lace in 9,000 patterns, dating from 1900 to 1935. It's still in use, plus other natural fabrics on which skilled artists hand paint or silk screen original Shibori, batik and other designs. Retail shop also sells one-of-a-kind antiques bags, furs, bits of old fabrics, shawls.

SOFT SHEERS FOR EVENING

The short restaurant dress makes news for Spring, usually in black sheer or lace, but newest in navy (Bill Blass) ... Longs are to the floor ... evening chemises ... ruffled fichu necklines ... flounced off-shoulders ... chiffon is like money in the bank -- pale, printed, in high colors -- hand-painted (Chester Weinberg) -- jeweled ... sheer black, often in lace, is this year's entry -- also in navy, red or brown ... sheer or not, lace is the new status fabric for evening -- appliqued -- black Victoriana (Brooks) -- weightless fisherman crochet (Mady Gerrard).

SOFT FABRICS TRENDING TO NATURAL FIBERS

Whether due to oil-caused price increases on synthetics, or consumer disaffection with many of them, designers now show COTTON for year-round wear -- polished cottons -- cotton shantung -- chambray -- poplin -- denim, in blue and also in bright hues -- Army cloth -- Indian cotton gauze -- Indonesian Batik printed cotton -- printed cotton lawn ... SILK crepe-de-chine, printed or solid, for day -- silk shantung -- silk pongee ... Lightweight GABARDINE returns in force -- often double-faced ... cashmere ... brushed mohair ... LEATHER -- including natural chamois.

THE SYNTHETICS are lead off by a big revival of fibranne -- in brilliant hues (Belle Saunders for Abe Schrader) ... ULTRASUEDE -- in coats and 2-tone suits (Blass) -- coat open below drawstring neck (Halston) -- candy pink sleeveless dress with circular skirt and jacket (Vera Maxwell) -- coral, rose-pink chemises, suits, pantsuit and evening separates (Lew Prince of Aldrich) ... Ultra-chamois, also washes or dry cleans, in its 2nd season (Wacs Works) ... QIANA jersey in engineered prints, the entire collection (Paganne) -- border prints -- Qiana/Lycra hand painted, bias cut (Brenner Couture).

THE NEEDLEWORKS: KNITS AND CROCHETS

HAND KNITS (Donald Brooks, Gloria Sachs) -- HAND CROCHETS (Blass, Gerrard, Bieff-Herrera) ... boucle knits (Burrows) ... boucle ribknit sleeves on Nyesta jersey (Narducci) ... chenille knits (Sachs) ... Antron with permanent pleats, hand-loomed and hand-finished (Gerrard) ... shiny black patent leather ribbon-knits.

PRINTS PLAY IT SAFE

STRIPES have the edge -- they go in every direction, some are broken (Trigere) -- men's, chalk or wider (Blass) -- men's hairline -- diagonal -- bold horizontal in varied widths ... PLAIDS, box and line, opaque or sheer (Trigere) -- shadow (Beene) ... DOTS, dots, dots, from pin (Rodrigues) to saucer size, some shadow dots on chiffon, barely visible (Brooks) ... FIGURATIVES -- nature motifs (Halston, designed by Hie Eula, executed by Reiko) -- big, true-to-life bumble bees on Army cloth, massed sailboats on black sailcloth (Friedricks) -- stylized peacock feathers on chiffon (Oscar) -- Chinese graphics (Casi).

SOFT PALES LEAD THE COLOR PARADE

PALE BEIGES predominate -- blanched almond, sand, champagne, vanilla, ivory, toffee, cafe-au-lait ... Jordan almond pastels ... shell pink is important ... SOFT GREENS -- celadon, leaf and other off-beat shades ... THE FATIGUES LOOK: KHAKI (Halston, Lauren, Wacs Works, Rafael, Jerry Silverman -- who also shows olive drab) ... and it wouldn't be Spring without navy/white.

COMING UP IN FI:

- ... Spring rainwear
- ... News in accessories
- ... Spring intimate apparel
- ... Western look in menswear

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